

What Employers Need To Know

Accommodating Disabilities- A Win: Win Situation

Accommodations

An estimated 55,000 Vermonters with disabilities are unemployed or underemployed. These people want to work, can work, and do work, however, they remain an untapped labor source.ⁱ Over 40% of Vermonters with disabilities are working full-time or part-time.ⁱⁱ

Employers are required to make reasonable accommodations that would enable an employee with a disability to perform the essential functions of a job, or to enjoy privileges of employment equal to those enjoyed by employees without disabilities.ⁱⁱⁱ

There are 15,215 Vermonters who cannot climb stairs, and 30,945 Vermonters who have difficulty climbing stairs. As a result, a total of 46,160 potential employees are prevented from working in an environment that doesn't have ramps or elevators.^{iv}

Reducing the Costs

Businesses that have fewer than 30 employees, or earn less than \$1 million in total revenue, may use a credit of up to \$5,000 a year to offset costs of altering facilities, using interpreters, or taking other steps to improve accessibility for customers or employees with disabilities.^v

The President's Committee's Job Accommodations Network has discovered that 31% of job accommodations cost nothing; 50% cost less than \$50; 69% cost less than \$500; and 88% cost less than \$1,000.^{vi}

All businesses can take a deduction of up to \$15,000 each year for the cost of removing barriers in facilities or vehicles.^{vii}

Benefits to the Employer

Employees with disabilities have equal or higher job performance ratings, higher retention rates, and lower instances of absenteeism.^{viii}

According to experts in the disability job placement field, increasing the availability of telework for unemployed individuals with a disability in the U.S. would save employers between \$48 billion and \$96 billion dollars annually in short-term and long-term disability payments, workers compensation, and personnel replacement costs. Telework offers the

possibility of an accessible, barrier-free workplace, flexible scheduling and the elimination of disability-related bias or discrimination^{ix}

Prior experience with workers with disabilities tends to produce more favorable perceptions and an increased willingness to hire persons with disabilities.

Studies indicate a strong positive relationship between job training and placement and reduced recidivism.^x

For individuals with disabilities, the inaccessibility of websites is a major disadvantage in the work place. The Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) has guidelines for web accessibility as it pertains to content, authoring tools and browsers. Web developers who design with accessibility in mind are often able to improve their web sites for all users, and not just for those users who have disabilities.^{xi}

Benefits to the State

Employment for people with disabilities reduces dependence on public assistance.^{xii} Unemployed Vermonters with disabilities cost our economy over \$71,609,000 in tax dollars per year.^{xiii}

Employment for people with disabilities increases tax revenues and earnings spent in Vermont.^{xiv}

Supported employment for people with disabilities reduces SSI and SSDI payments. (In FY '01, SSI and SSDI payments were reduced an estimated \$2,554,657)^{xv}

ⁱ Vermont VocRehab.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

^{iv} One In Five, Vermont Center for Independent Living.

^v National Organization on Disability.

^{vi} One In Five.

^{vii} National Organization on Disability.

^{viii} National Organization on Disability.

^{ix} U.S. Department of Labor-Office of Disability Employment Policy, BLN, Research Summary: July 2002.

^x Harrier, Miles D., "Recidivism Among Federal Prison Releases in 1987." Federal Bureau of Prisons, Washington, DC.

^{xi} Access, by the ADAinfo@NewEnglandADA.org.

^{xii} Vermont VocRehab.

^{xiii} One In Five.

^{xiv} Vermont VocRehab.

^{xv} Ibid.